From Rightist Freshman to Leftist Senior? An Explorative Study on University Faculties in their Role as Political Socialization Agents

Joris Boonen, Meta van der Linden & Marc Hooghe

Center for Citizenship & Democracy

University of Leuven, Belgium

Joris.Boonen@soc.kuleuven.be

Paper presented at the 'Elections, Public Opinion and Parties (EPOP) specialist group', 12-14 September, University of Edinburgh.

Abstract

The 'impressionable years' hypothesis states that people are highly vulnerable to shifts in attitudes during early adulthood, and that stability of political attitudes increases with age. Leaving the familiar surroundings of the parental home and the high school and going off to college is one of the most intense changes one goes through in this phase in life. In this paper, we investigate the impact of this new social environment by studying relation between college attendance and political attitudes. We use data from an online university wide survey conducted at the KU Leuven in the spring of 2014. Our explorative analyses indicate significant differences between students enrolled in different faculties. However, these differences do not seem to be a result of a long-term political socialization process within a specific educational trajectory, as we find no significant differences between junior and senior students within each faculty. This indicates that the structural differences between groups of students are probably a result of other self-selection mechanisms and earlier attitude formation during adolescence.

Keywords: College attendance, political attitudes, left-right, ethnocentrism, Belgium

Introduction

From studies on the development of political and social attitudes, we have learned that most basic political attitudes and value patterns are formed within adolescence (Flanagan, 2013; Hooghe & Wilkenfeld, 2007). Furthermore, political attitudes learned and developed within adolescence tend to persist over time, making this one of the most important formative phases in life in this respect. Traditionally, the family is seen as one of the strongest social network settings in which political attitudes are shaped during adolescence (Jennings & Niemi, 1981; Zuckerman, Dasović, & Fitzgerald, 2007). In a later phase, entering young adulthood, these political orientations are shaped further within what has been called a process of 'crystallization' (Jennings, Stoker, & Bowers, 2009). Following the 'Impressionable Years Hypothesis', it is expected that the period of late adolescence and young adult years is a phase in life in which individuals are still highly susceptible to influences from their surrounding environment (Sears & Funk, 1999). To some extent, this hypothesis contradicts the idea of enduring persistence of political attitudes that are formed during a phase of adolescence. It suggests that basic political predispositions continue to develop well into early adulthood, albeit at a slower pace or a weaker intensity (Markus, 1979; Sears & Funk, 1999).

For a lot of individuals, one of the most important experiences in this period of young adulthood is the transition from high school to higher education, which is often combined with (temporarily) leaving the parental home in the case of a college education (Funk & Willits, 1987). Studies on political socialization have shown that, during adolescence, school environments can operate as strong political socialization agents, within and outside the classroom. School environments can serve as 'mini polities' or settings in which younger generations learn about what it means to live in a democratic society (Flanagan, Stoppa, Syvertsen, & Stout, 2010; Flanagan, 2013). The aim in this paper is to study the extent to which this can also be applied to university environments.

More specifically, our aim is to study to what extent the college environment contributes to the formation of political attitudes during the 'impressionable years'. Therefore, we analyze the differences between the political attitudes of students who are enrolled in different university faculties. In a first step, we describe the structural differences between these groups of students *as such*. Secondly, we examine whether these differences are a consequence of self-selection (supporting the

idea that the students' political attitudes were mainly formed before entering university, for instance within the family context) or whether there are indications that the differences are a due to a process of political socialization during the years of college education (supporting the idea that college attendance shapes political attitudes within the 'impressionable years'). More specifically, we will analyze whether the differences between groups of students are already clearly visible in the first year of enrollment in a specific study, or whether these differences grow stronger as the students advance in their educational trajectory. This way, we could get a first impression of the way in which the social surrounding of a university faculty stimulates the development of political attitudes in a certain direction.

We aim to contribute to the current literature in two ways. First, by clearly exploring the differences between types of education. A lot of research on the influence of college education on the development of political attitudes treats 'students' as a homogeneous group, mostly compared with other young citizens who are not enrolled in college education (Funk & Willits, 1987; Longo & Meyer, 2006; Niemi & Hanmer, 2004). We argue that it is important to take into account structural differences *within* the college surrounding, starting with the specific type of education a student is enrolled in. Secondly, the aim is to learn more about the way in which length of enrollment in college education plays a role to examine the possibility of a political socialization process throughout university.

We use a data from a recently administered online survey among 7,311 students, conducted in May 2014 among KU Leuven students on the occasion of the regional, federal and European elections of May, 25th 2014.

Adolescent formation of political attitudes: family influence

The bulk of literature on the development of political preferences among young citizens has shown that basic political preferences are learned at a young, pre-political age (Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960; Flanagan, 2013; Jennings & Niemi, 1968, 1981). Adolescence is a period in life in which political attitudes are shaped and crystallized. Young citizens learn about the 'good' and 'bad' views in the political world (Dinas, 2013) and develop a partisan preference even before they develop

a more qualified understanding of the complex political reality. Although these attachments might not be fully developed ideological convictions, parents strongly contribute to the development of these orientations. One of the most intensely studied processes in this respect is the development of a party identification among pre-adult citizens (Campbell et al., 1960; Jennings, Stoker, & Bowers, 2009; Percheron & Jennings, 1981). A number of studies in different time frames and different political settings has shown that if an adolescent child develops a party identification that is similar to that of his or her parents, through a process of social learning or political socialization, this party identification is more likely to be retained later in life, depending on the strength and stability of the parental identification (Zuckerman et al., 2007).

This example of party identification already indicates that the developmental period of adolescence is a key period in the development of political attitudes, and that it influences our political orientations throughout the life span. The nuclear family is a very important social setting for social learning (Bandura, 1971), and earlier empirical evidence on the strong similarities between parents and children (Hyman, 1959; Jennings & Niemi, 1981) seems to be reconfirmed by more recent studies (Hooghe & Boonen, *forthcoming*; Jennings et al., 2009; Zuckerman et al., 2007). In a systematic longitudinal study on the persistence of political preferences that are acquired during adolescence within the household, Jennings, Stoker & Bowers (2009) showed that political predispositions that are learned within adolescence tend to stay stable over time. This is particularly the case in households in which politics is frequently discussed and in which parents are engaged with politics. On the subsequent development into early adulthood, the authors describe it as follows: '*Children who acquire political predispositions early in life from their parents are more stable in their early adulthood than those who leave home without it'*.

However, we do need to be careful with overgeneralizing this picture of family socialization, as a lot is for instance dependent on the type of political trait, the salience of politics for parents and the accuracy with which the parental signals are received and interpreted by the child (Acock & Bengtson, 1980). Therefore, it is also important to study the further political development beyond this period of adolescence.

Political socialization beyond the family context

Although decades of socialization research have shown that political preferences are strongly rooted within the family and that parents play an important role in this development at a pre-adult age, this process does not end at the age of eighteen and the influential period of 'impressionable years' goes on into early adulthood. Once adolescents or young adults leave the parental home, they are under influence of a lot of different factors and are likely to encounter various new political stimuli (Dinas, 2013).

Entering a college environment is one of the most intense changes in a young adult's life, particularly when it is combined with leaving the parental home and moving to a new city (Funk & Willits, 1987). It has been demonstrated that a higher education does not only fosters intellectual development, but that it also plays a role in the development of political attitudes and beliefs. College is believed to 'free' the mind and provide opportunities besides intellectual growth for personal development (Funk & Willits, 1987). One particular strand in the literature has focused on the importance of higher education as the road to 'moral enlightenment' for negative attitudes towards outgroups (Hodson & Busseri, 2012). Negative intergroup attitudes are seen as 'unenlightened beliefs' (Allport, 1954) that stem from a narrow and undemocratic strain of thought. In the Socialization Theory (Coenders & Scheepers, 2003) the formal educational system is regarded as the most important socializing agent for the transmission of scientific and democratic values and norms. Prejudiced beliefs are incongruent with these values and thus learning democratic ideals should countervail unenlightened prejudiced beliefs (Selznick & Steinberg, 1969). In this view, the university is a place where young adults learn to be open-minded about diversity and individuals from different cultures (Kenworthy, Turner, Hewstone, & Voci, 2005).

Empirical studies on the effects of higher education on personal attitudes and values have indeed mostly shown that college attendance enhances the liberalization of attitudes. One of the most common findings in literature is that students develop less traditional values, for instance on gender roles (Bryant, 2003; Funk & Willits, 1987). College fosters a liberalization of attitudes, and even individuals who only attend college for one year have been found to differ significantly from their

non-college counterparts when it comes to attitudes towards religion and gender roles (Funk & Willits, 1987).

These studies also stress the importance of taking into account specific within-college-factors. Bryant (2003) for instance underscores the importance of the type of education on the change in attitudes throughout the college years. In a descriptive study on the political preferences of college students, Niemi and Hanmer (2004) also showed the importance of taking into account the college major in which students are enrolled. In this study on the 2004 presidential elections, the Democratic candidate John Kerry had the highest support (66 %) among those majoring in arts and humanities, while support for Bush was highest among those majoring in education (51 %).

The aim in this paper is to study the way in which university faculties can play a role in shaping political attitudes in the 'impressionable years'. We do this by analyzing three specific political attitudes that have also been studied within the context of family political socialization. In their study on the persistence of political predispositions, Jennings, Stoker & Bowers (2009) demonstrated that it is important to differentiate between clear-cut and concrete political objects and more abstract, historically conditioned attributes (pp. 782). Therefore, we analyze one very broad measure for political ideology *(left-right identification),* one clear-cut and highly salient political policy preference measure *(preference for more power redistribution towards the regions in Belgium)* and one affect-laden political attitude *(ethnocentrism*).

First, by analyzing the differences in left-right identification among students, the aim is to broadly test the expectation that students develop a more specific and more outspoken ideological orientation throughout their academic trajectory. A **left-right identification** is a very general, abstract measure of ideology, and has been described as a 'super-issue' overarching political attitudes on all main dimensions (Inglehart, 1990). Particularly in a political landscape with several cross-cutting political cleavages such as Belgium (Deschouwer, 2009), we can expect that a left-right identification is a complex political orientation. Building further on the idea that more complex political preferences are developed less outspoken within early adolescence, we could expect a further developmental process in the formation of this identification from late adolescence into early adulthood.

Second, we will analyze a very specific policy preference measure, which is highly salient in the current political debate in Belgium, namely a preference for more or less **power redistribution** towards the regions (Deschouwer, 2013). The ideological debate on a further state reform in Belgium has been one of the most dominant political discussions over the past 7 years (since the federal elections of 2007), leading to prolonged government formation periods and even a resignation of the federal government in 2010. Although electoral research in 2009 has shown that it is not the most dominant issue in public opinion when compared with social security, economy or criminality (Deschouwer and Sinardet 2010), it is shown to be a very polarizing issue that also divides the political party landscape, particularly in the Flemish region of Belgium.

Third, we analyze differences in **ethnocentrism** among students to include a more affect-laden attitude in the analyses as well. It has been argued that the longer and the more intense one attends the educational system, the more they are exposed to democratic values and norms that should countervail prejudiced beliefs (Coenders & Scheepers, 2003; Selznick & Steiberg, 1969). This leads us to expect that the more senior students have more enlightened beliefs about other groups, in this case immigrants, than freshmen. We decided to focus on immigrants, because they form the largest ethnic minority in Belgium and other Western-European countries. Moreover, when speaking about prejudiced beliefs, it is important to note that immigrants in Western-Europe are predominantly Muslims from Morocco and Turkey, who are often stereotyped in a negative manner (Cuddy et al., 2009).

Hypotheses

Contrary to most studies on the influence of a college surrounding on the development of political attitudes, we will not be comparing college students to non-students, but focus on the differences between faculties. We expect three main mechanisms to explain the clustering of students in this respect in different faculties. First, university faculties make up a smaller social network than the university as a whole, and a lot of interaction between students obviously takes place with students enrolled in the same faculty. This smaller social network could function as a socializing agent in the same sense as interaction with class mates in high school are found to have an influence on views on

democracy (Funk & Willits, 1987). Secondly, the specific type of education obviously enriches students' societal and scientific knowledge in a very specific area, which could also directly or indirectly change their views on societal problems and alter their political preferences. Third, different types of education attract different types of adolescents with fundamentally different interests. In this sense, the clustering we expect could also be a consequence of self-selection. Both structural determinants (family background, socio-economic status) and individual characteristics (e.g. personality traits) could influence both the selection of a certain academic study as the development of political preferences.

Some of the above described empirical studies also already hinted at the importance of taking into account the type of education. 'College students' are not expected to be a politically homogeneous group, an expectation that is put forward in a first hypothesis:

> **H1:** *The type of education (university faculty) in which a student is enrolled is related to his or her left-right identification, preferences towards power redistribution and level of ethnocentrism.*

Moreover, as we expect that the specific type of education in which a student is enrolled is related to his or her political preferences, we put forward the expectation that differences between university faculties will be more clearly visible in later stages of the academic trajectory. This expectation is based on the idea that if the type of education matters, students who are enrolled longer in a certain study will be socialized in this direction more strongly. More specifically, we expect to observe significant differences between more junior and more senior students, in general and per faculty:

> **H2:** *Faculty-based differences in left-right identification, preferences towards power redistribution and in the level of ethnocentrism of students will be more clearly visible in later stages of the students' academic trajectory.*

Data & Methods

To investigate this we use data from the KU Leuven Veto Survey 2014, a large scale online survey that was conducted in the spring of 2014, in the run up to the federal, regional and European elections of May 25th. The survey was sent out to all registered students from the University of Leuven in Belgium. One month before the election, all KU Leuven students received a first e-mail to participate in this survey. One week later they received a reminder. In total, 7,311 students filled out the online survey. Since we will be comparing students enrolled in different phases in their academic trajectory, we will only be using data gathered among the 8 largest faculties. In the final analyses, we will be using 4,424 students who filled out the survey entirely and are enrolled in one of these major faculties. In total, 696 Law students, 518 Economy students, 400 Social Science students, 714 Arts students, 480 Psychology students, 383 Science Students, 548 Engineering Students and 685 Medicine students filled out the online survey. This is a large scale university wide survey focused political preferences, but off course, there are a number of important disadvantages to this data set which should be taken into account when interpreting and discussing these results.

First, these data are not longitudinal. We will be comparing students enrolled in different phases of their academic trajectory, but these data do not allow us to analyze clear 'development' of these attitudes over time. Therefore, we would need longitudinal data gathered over several years (e.g. Funk & Willits, 1987). However, a possible advantage of surveying all students at one particular point in time is that we can rule out that differences between years are due to a general shift in attitudes due to a rise in attention and saliency of a particular political topic, such as a demand for more regional competencies. Second, this is an online survey and with response rates of 10 to 20 % per faculty we cannot ascertain that this will be representative for the student population. Third, to lower the participation threshold for this survey, the questionnaire in itself is deliberately relatively brief, which also limits the analytical possibilities to some extent.

Dependent variables

For the analyses, we used three main dependent variables that are briefly described below. A first main dependent variable is **left-right identification**, scored on a 0-10 scale. All students were asked to indicate their own positioning on the traditional left-right ideology scale with the following question: 'In politics, the terms 'Left' and 'Right' are often used. Could you describe your own views on a scale from 0 to 10, in which 0 indicates 'Left', 5 'Center' and 10 'Right'. Mean score for this variable is 5.06 with a standard deviation of 2.17.

A second dependent variable is a sum scale measuring a preference for a **stronger Flemish region**. This scale is made up from three items, all measured on a 1-7 Likert scale ranging from 'Totally disagree' to 'Totally agree'. A Cronbach's Alpha scale validity test showed a scale reliability of .76. The principal component analysis is presented in Table 1 and shows a clear one-dimensional pattern for this variable, labeled 'Preference for stronger Flemish region'.

Table 1. Principal Component Analysis 'Preference for stronger Flemish region'

	Factor loading
"Flanders should have stronger competencies"	.859
"Flanders should be an independent state"	.811
"The Belgian federal state should be reinforced" *(reversed)*	.786
Eigenvalue	2.015
Explained variance	67.17 %
Cronbach's Alpha	.755

Source: KU Leuven Veto Student Survey 2014.

In the remainder of the paper, we will use a mean scale of the three items. This variable has a mean score of 3.39 with a standard deviation of 1.32.

The third dependent variable is '**Ethnocentrism'**. This variable is made up of three items as well, measured on the same 1-7 Likert scale ranging from 'Totally disagree' to 'Totally agree'. A Cronbach's Alpha scale validity test showed a scale reliability of .77. This variable has a mean score of 3.41 with a standard deviation of 1.25.

Table 2. Principal Component Analysis 'Ethnocentrism'

	Factor loading
"It is bad for the Belgian economy that people from other countries come to live here."	.844
"The cultural life in Belgium is being undermined by people from other countries who have come to live here."	.825
"Belgium has become a better place thanks to the presence of people from other countries who have come to live here." *(reversed)*	.814
Eigenvalue	2.055
Explained variance	68.51 %
Cronbach's Alpha	.768

Source: KU Leuven Veto Student Survey 2014.

Independent variables

The most important independent variables of interest are obviously the type of education and the years of college enrollment. '**Type of education'** is a categorical variable with 8 values: Psychology, Arts, Social Sciences, Medicine, Law, Science, Engineering Science and Economy. For reasons of data reliability, we have decided not to distinguish further between types of education, such as the specific master programs, but rather focus on general enrollment in a university faculty. Our second variable of interest is **'years of education'**. For this variable, we have again recoded the student responses in four main categories: First Bachelor, Second Bachelor, Third Bachelor and Master. We have decided to group the students in the different master years together, to be able to compare the master students in different types of education. Every type of study has three bachelor years, but the number of master years for these studies varies between studies.

The brief student survey also included some additional background variables. In the final regression models, we control for **age** (Mean 21.86, SD 3.07) and **gender** (female =1; 53,5%).

Analyses

Differences between faculties

First off, the means of the three dependent variables were inspected for the eight largest university faculties separately. A clear pattern can be observed in Figure 1 as Psychology, Arts and Social

Sciences students appear to identify more with the political left, are less in favor of Flemish a stronger or independent Flemish region and show less anti-immigrant prejudice than Medicine, Law, Engineering Science and Economy students. To test for the statistical significance of the mean differences between the faculties on the three dependent variables ANOVA post-hoc tests were used. It is important to consider that the sample sizes of the faculties were somewhat unbalanced. Hence, Gabriel's pairwise test procedure was used, which is designed to cope with situations in which sample sizes are slightly different (Field, 2009). Table 3 for mean differences between the faculties on left-right identification, preferences towards power redistribution and ethnocentrism reveals that the differences between faculties are for the most part statistically significant. However, we did not find significant clusters of faculties even though the means in Table 1 seem to illustrate a consistent pattern for all three dependent variables. These results are in line with H1: college students do not form a homogenous group and are to some extent clustered according to their type of education with regard to their political beliefs and social attitudes.

Different types of education attract different types of students, and one of the most structural differences between faculties is obviously the gender balance. To rule out the possibility that the significant differences we observe below can be attributed to this structural difference in the student population of different faculties, we ran an additional analysis in which we controlled for gender. Gender is indeed significantly correlated to the different dependent variables in the models, but does not alter the relation between educational type and political preferences.

Figure 1. Mean scores per university faculty

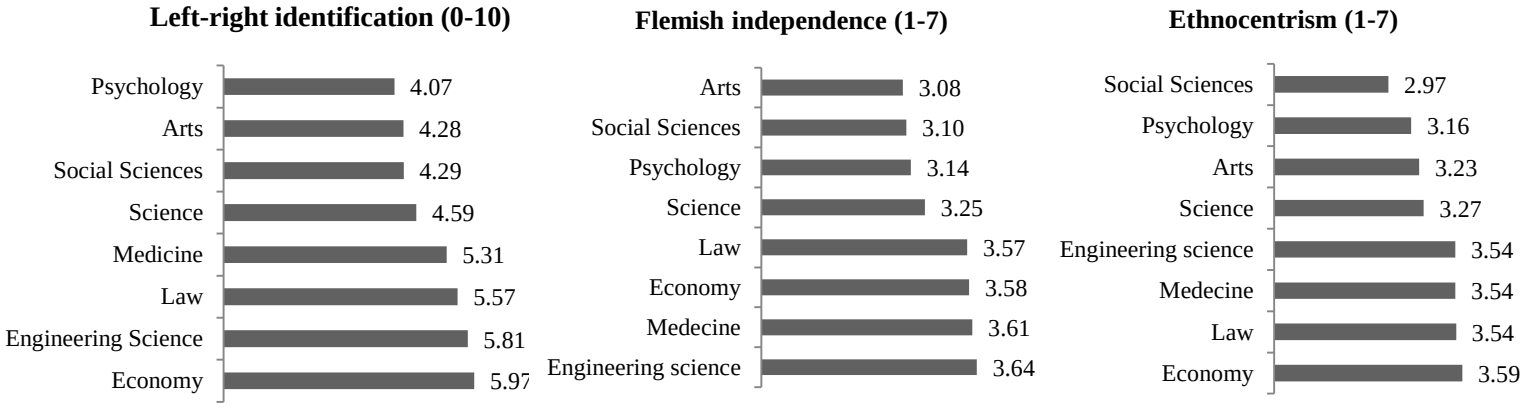

Table 3. Post-hoc tests for differences between means on political ideology, support for a stronger Flemish region and ethnocentrism. Variables are rescaled from 0 to 1 for comparison.

		Mean difference left-right identification	Mean difference support for a stronger Flemish region	Mean difference Ethnocentrism
Law	Economy	-0.043**	0.001	-0.010
	Social Sciences	0.126***	0.064***	0.081***
	Arts	0.128***	0.071***	0.043***
	Psychology	0.155***	0.064***	0.057***
	Science	0.108***	0.047**	0.033
	Engineering Science	-0.024	-0.013	-0.004
	Medicine	0.022	-0.008	-0.005
Economy	Social Sciences	0.170***	0.063***	**0.091*** **
	Arts	0.171***	0.070***	0.053***
	Psychology	**0.199*** **	0.063***	0.067***
	Science	0.151***	0.046**	0.044**
	Engineering Science	0.019	-0.015	0.006
	Medicine	0.065***	-0.009	0.006
Social Sciences	Arts	0.001	0.007	-0.038*
	Psychology	0.029	-0.001	-0.024
	Science	-0.019	-.018	-0.048**
	Engineering Science	-0.150***	-.078***	-0.085***
	Medicine	-0.104***	-.072***	-0.086***
Arts	Psychology	0.028	-0.008	0.014
	Science	-0.020	-0.025	-0.010
	Engineering Science	-0.152***	**-0.085*** **	-0.047***
	Medicine	-0.106***	-0.079***	-0.047***
Psychology	Science	-0.048*	-0.017	-0.024
	Engineering Science	-0.179***	-0.078***	-0.061***
	Medicine	-0.133***	-0.072***	-0.062***
Science	Engineering Science	-0.132***	-0.060***	-0.037*
	Medicine	-0.086***	-0.055***	-0.038*
Engineering Science	Medicine	0.046**	0.006	-0.001

Source: KU Leuven Veto Student Survey 2014. Results are mean difference scores from ANOVA post-hoc tests (Gabriel) (*p<.05, **p<.01, *** p<.001).

The finding that college students are clustered within university faculties when it comes to their political attitudes and preferences, does off course not imply a causal relation between both. These results do not yet tell us anything about whether the enrollment in a specific college education has an influence on the development of specific attitudes. To explore this relation further, we move on to a next analytical step and analyze the differences between more junior and senior students, both within the university as a whole, as within each studied faculty.

Differences between junior and senior students

In a second step, we examine whether these differences between the faculties become more visible in later stages of the academic trajectory. The differences between first-year, second-year, third-year and Master students are examined for left-right identification, a preference for a stronger Flemish region and ethnocentrism. Upon inspection of Figure 2, left-right identification and the preference for a stronger Flemish region appear to be stable over the four years of university education. The mean level of ethnocentrism, however, appears to decline the longer one attends university. This is further illustrated by the results in Table 4, in which statistically significant effects were only found for ethnocentrism, R^2 = .11. Following the third year of a university Bachelor program significantly predicted a decline in ethnocentrism, b = -.28, p < .001. Attending a Master program was an even stronger predictor of a decline in ethnocentrism, b = -.34, p < .001. These results somewhat decreased after controlling for gender and age, but remained substantial. The results for ethnocentrism seem to indicate that students who are enrolled longer within a university develop more tolerant views towards immigrants.

In an additional analysis, reported in Table 4, we ran these same models for every faculty separately. The purpose of these analyses is to examine whether the differences between faculties could be the result of a 'socialization process'. If this would be the case (H2), we would expect to observe significant differences between students in different phases of their trajectory *within* each faculty. As can be observed in Table 4, the results show no robust pattern. Apart from a few exceptions (such as the significant decline of ethnocentrism of students enrolled in the Law faculty

and to some extent for students enrolled in Engineering) we did not observe significant differences between more junior and more senior students within each faculty.

This seems to indicate that the enrollment in different university faculties does not affect the development of political preferences, and that the significant differences we did observe between the faculties cannot be directly linked to a political socialization process, but rather seem to be the consequence of self-selection.

Figure 2. Mean scores per year

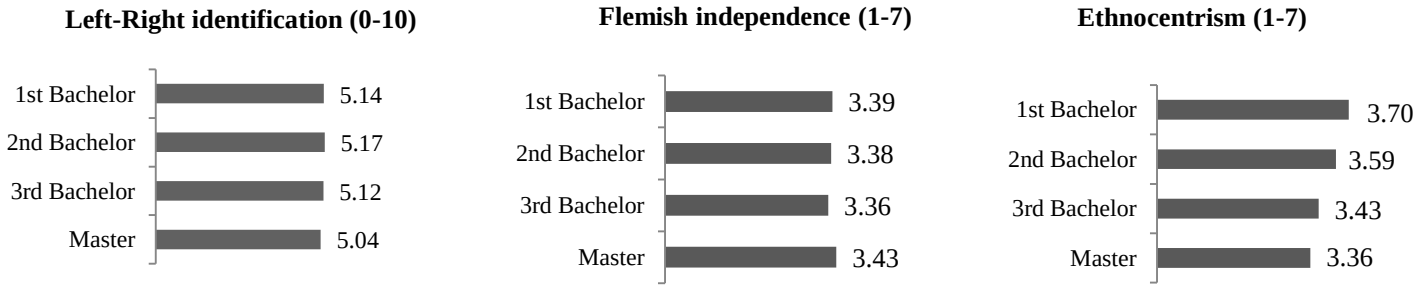

Table 3. Linear regression models predicting left-right identification, preference for a stronger Flemish region and ethnocentrism

	Left-right identification		**Stronger Flemish region**		**Ethnocentrism**	
	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.
Model I						
Intercept	*5.113*	*.068*	*3.372*	*.041*	*3.629*	*.039*
Second Bachelor	.027	.107	.021	.065	-.120	.062
Third Bachelor	-.086	.103	-.020	.063	-.283***	.059
Master	-.105	.084	.045	.051	-.340***	.048
R^2	.001		.019		.112	
Model II						
Intercept	*6.561*	*.256*	*3.335*	*.156*	*4.402*	*.149*
Second Bachelor	.056	.106	.004	.065	-.090	.062
Third Bachelor	-.007	.103	-.051	.063	-.214***	.060
Master	.109	.095	.000	.058	-.189**	.055
Age	-.052***	.012	.013	.008	-.039***	.007
Gender (female =1)	-.788***	.064	-.425***	.039	-.016	.037
R^2	.037		.165		.138	

Source: KU Leuven Veto Student Survey 2014. Results are unstandardized coefficients (B), standard errors (S.E.) and *p*-values (*p<.05, **p<.01, *** p<.001).

Table 4. Multi-group linear regression models predicting left-right identification, preference for a stronger Flemish region and ethnocentrism (Control variables gender and age not reported)

	Left-right identification		**Stronger Flemish region**		**Ethnocentrism**	
	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.
Law						
Intercept	*6.680****	*.587*	*3.334****	*.405*	*3.950****	*.375*
Second Bachelor	-.057	.249	.104	.171	-.237	.159
Third Bachelor	-.019	.239	-.023	.165	-.461**	.153
Master	.119	.214	.001	.147	-.519***	.136
R^2	.022		.022		.034	
Economy						
Intercept	*8.740****	*.723*	*4.988****	*.521*	*5.611****	*.484*
Second Bachelor	-.201	.273	.013	.196	-.008	.182
Third Bachelor	-.147	.266	.152	.191	.005	.178
Master	.129	.258	.355	.186	-.043	.173
R^2	.068		.025		.049	
Social Sciences						
Intercept	*5.371****	*.910*	*3.300****	*.581*	*3.755****	*.506*
Second Bachelor	.271	.390	.124	.249	.013	.216
Third Bachelor	.170	.352	.125	.225	-.320	.196
Master	-.159	.329	-.081	.210	-.267	.182
R^2	.023		.033		.023	
Arts						
Intercept	*5.020****	*.512*	*2.916****	*.302*	*3.975****	*.293*
Second Bachelor	.116	.252	-.140	.148	-.046	.144
Third Bachelor	-.092	.236	-.055	.139	-.148	.135
Master	.041	.218	-.142	.128	-.134	.125
R^2	.005		.020		.015	
Psychology						
Intercept	*5.341****	*.762*	*3.011****	*.388*	*4.008****	*.428*
Second Bachelor	.143	.313	-.075	.159	-.126	.175
Third Bachelor	-.478	.312	-.346*	.159	-.188	.175
Master	-.049	.280	-.141	.142	-.078	.157
R^2	.019		.014		.028	
Science						
Intercept	*5.031****	*1.210*	*1.873***	*.698*	*4.096****	*.684*
Second Bachelor	-.172	.375	-.109	.216	.142	.212
Third Bachelor	-.230	.356	-.228	.205	-.224	.201
Master	-.593	.375	-.428	.217	-.240	.212
R^2	.023		.027		.032	
Engineering						
Intercept	*4.969****	*.884*	*2.356****	*.630*	*4.528****	*.551*
Second Bachelor	.156	.243	.127	.173	-.284	.151
Third Bachelor	.478	.269	.089	.191	-.095	.168
Master	-.065	.277	-.124	.197	-.437*	.173
R^2	.022		.030		.042	
Medicine						
Intercept	*6.620****	*.714*	*3.391****	*.442*	*4.542****	*.447*
Second Bachelor	-.211	.277	-.049	.172	-.085	.173
Third Bachelor	.182	.287	-.153	.178	-.166	.180
Master	.160	.264	.019	.164	.045	.165
R^2	.035		.045		.009	

Source: KU Leuven Veto Student Survey 2014. Results are unstandardized coefficients (B), standard errors (S.E.) and *p*-values (*p<.05, **p<.01, *** p<.001).

Discussion

Before discussing the main results and implications of this explorative paper, we would like to address some of the limitations of the study. First, we should acknowledge again that this is not a longitudinal data set which makes that we cannot make any solid arguments on the *development* of political preferences across college years. Second, the data we use are gathered within the largest eight faculties of the university, which means that we excluded a large number of students who are enrolled in smaller faculties. The results therefore not allow us to generalize these findings to the whole student population. Third, to lower the threshold of participation in the survey, the questionnaire in itself was limited in length. This makes that the possibilities for further robustness checks of these models, for instance with additional political attitudes or additional control variables are quite limited.

Nevertheless, when looking at the results, some clear patterns do occur. For the three main dependent variables in this study, we have found structural and significant differences between students who are enrolled in different university faculties. These findings underscore our initial argument that 'college students' are not a homogeneous group when it comes to political preferences and that they are indeed clearly clustered within different types of education. When it comes to left-right identification and feelings towards immigrants, we can for instance clearly observe that students enrolled in the study of psychology have more liberal attitudes than those enrolled in studies such as Economy. In general, students enrolled in Psychology, Arts and Social Sciences tend to be more Lefist, less inclined to agree with a stronger Flemish state and less ethnocentric.

However, these differences seem to be a result of self-selection rather than of socialization throughout the years of education, as we could not observe that these differences became larger over the years. For almost none of the studied political attitudes, the difference in attitudes between faculties changed significantly over the years. We did observe significant differences between students in enrolled in different types of education, but these differences seem not to be the result of an ongoing political socialization process, as we did not find significant differences between more junior and more senior students *within* each faculty. In other words, students already seem to have clearly demarcated preferences in their first year of college education. When compared with students enrolled in other faculties, Economy students for instance have the most outspoken rightist preference in their first year,

and these differences do not increase or decrease over time. Looking back at the expectations that were proposed for the second hypothesis, these results seem to indicate that the clustering of students according to their political preferences seems to be a result of earlier political socialization or coincides with other shared interests which made them choose a certain education in the first place. This opens up possibilities for future research. We obviously do not expect that the selection of a certain study is dependent on one's personal political preferences, but that other structural characteristics such as family background, socio-economic status and even personality traits can play an important role in both the selection of an academic study as in the development of political preferences. This specific hypothesis could be developed further in future research.

Looking at the full sample, the university surrounding does seem to have an effect on a *general* and not a *faculty-specific* 'liberalization' of attitudes towards immigrants. Scores on the ethnocentrism scale decline steadily and significantly, indicating that the college surrounding does indeed generally contribute to more positive views towards immigrants. This process is for instance clearly visible for students enrolled in the Law faculty.

In this paper we were bound to a cross-sectional analysis of different students, enrolled in different years of the same faculty. This limits the possibilities to make strong claims on socialization processes. However, the patterns that do occur are clear and stable, and therefore we expect future studies using longitudinal data to reaffirm these findings.

References

Acock, A. C., & Bengtson, V. L. (1980). Socialization and attribution processes: Actual versus perceived similarity among parents and youth. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *42*(3), 501–515.

Allport, G. W. (1954). *The nature of prejudice.* Cambridge: Addison-Wesley.

Bandura, A. (1971). *Social Learning Theory*. New York: General Learning Press.

Bryant, A. N. (2003). Changes in Attitudes Toward Women ' s Roles : Predicting Gender-Role Traditionalism Among College Students, *48*(February).

Campbell, A., Converse, P. E., Miller, W. E., & Stokes, D. E. (1960). *The American Voter*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Coenders, M. & Peer, S. (2003). The effect of education on nationalism and ethnic exclusionism: An international comparison. *Political Psychology, 24,* 313-343.

Cuddy, A. J., Fiske, S. T., Kwan, V. S., Glick, P., Demoulin, S., Leyens, J. P., ... & Ziegler, R. (2009). Stereotype content model across cultures: Towards universal similarities and some differences. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 48,* 1-33.

Deschouwer, K. (2009). *The Politics of Belgium: Governing a Divided Society*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Dinas, E. (2013). Why Does the Apple Fall Far from the Tree? How Early Political Socialization Prompts Parent-Child Dissimilarity. *British Journal of Political Science*, 1–26. doi:10.1017/S0007123413000033

Flanagan, C. A. (2013). *Teenage citizens. The political theories of the young* (p. 320). Harvard: Harvard University Press.

Flanagan, C. A., Stoppa, T., Syvertsen, A. K., & Stout, M. (2010). Schools and Social Trust. In L. R. Sherrod, J. Torney-Purta, & C. A. Flanagan (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Civic Engagement in Youth* (pp. 307–331). Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.

Field, A. (2009). Discovering statistics using SPSS: third edition. London, UK: SAGE pubpications Ltd.

Funk, R. B., & Willits, F. K. (1987). College Attendance and Attitude Change: A Panel Study, 1970-81. *Sociology of Education*, *60*(4), 224–231.

Hodson, G., & Busseri, M. A. (2012). Bright minds and dark attitudes: Lower cognitive ability predicts greater prejudice through right-wing ideology and low intergroup contact. *Psychological Science, 23,* 187-195.

Hooghe, M., & Boonen, J. (forthcoming). The Intergenerational Transmission of Voting Intentions in a Multiparty Setting: An Analysis of Voting Intentions and Political Discussion Among 15-Year-Old Adolescents and Their Parents in Belgium. *Youth & Society*. doi:10.1177/0044118X13496826

Hooghe, M., & Wilkenfeld, B. (2007). The Stability of Political Attitudes and Behaviors across Adolescence and Early Adulthood: A Comparison of Survey Data on Adolescents and Young Adults in Eight Countries. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *37*(2), 155–167. doi:10.1007/s10964-007-9199-x

Hyman, H. (1959). *Political socialization : a study in the psychology of political behavior*. Glenncoe: Free Press.

Hyman, H. H., & Wright, C. R. (1979). Education's lasting influence on values. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Inglehart, R. (1990). *Cultural shift in Advanced Industrial Society*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Jennings, M. K., & Niemi, R. G. (1968). The Transmission of Political Values from Parent to Child. *The American Political Science Review*, *62*(1), 169–184.

Jennings, M. K., & Niemi, R. G. (1981). *Generations and politics: A panel study of young adults and their parents*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Jennings, M. K., Stoker, L., & Bowers, J. (2009). Politics across Generations: Family Transmission Reexamined. *The Journal of Politics*, *71*(3), 782 –799. doi:10.1017/S0022381609090719

Kenworthy, J. B., Turner, R. N., Hewstone, M., & Voci, A. (2005). Intergroup contact: When does it work, and why? In John F. Dovidio, Peter Glick, & Laurie A. Rudman, (Eds.) On the nature of prejudice. Fifty years after Allport (pp. 278-292). Malden: Blackwell.

Longo, N. V., & Meyer, R. P. (2006). College Students and Politics : A Literature Review.

Markus, G. B. (1979). The Political Environment and the Dynamics of Public Attitudes : A Panel Study. *American Journal of Political Science*, *23*(2), 338–359.

Niemi, R., & Hanmer, M. (2004). *College students in the 2004 Election*.

Percheron, A., & Jennings, M. K. (1981). Political Continuities in French Families: A New Perspective on an Old Controversy. *Comparative Politics*, *13*(4), 421–436. doi:10.2307/421719

Sears, D. O., & Funk, C. L. (1999). Evidence of the Long-Term Persistence ofAdults ' Political Predispositions. *The Journal of Politics*, *61*(1), 1–28.

Selznick, G. J., & Steinberg, S. (1969). The tenacity of prejudice. Anti-semitism in contemporary America. New York: Harper and Row.

Zuckerman, A. S., Dasović, J., & Fitzgerald, J. (2007). *Partisan Families: The Social Logic of Bounded Partisanship in Germany and Britain*. New York: Cambridge University Press.